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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000642

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD MACINNES AND PAGNEW, NEA/ARP
CKANESHIRO
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA
USCINCCENT FOR PAO AND POLAD
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH AND HAMBLEY; PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR KPAQ OIIIP BA

SUBJECT: BAHRAINI MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQI POW TREATMENT

11. Summary: All six Bahraini daily newspapers continue to run stories about U.S. mistreatment of Iraqi POWs. In addition to photos of prisoners, newspapers are running photos of families waiting outside Iraqi prisons to obtain information about their loved ones inside. Letters to the editor pages are also full of letters from ordinary Bahrainis and other Arab and South Asian expats living and working in Bahrain. These letters include the same themes as regular columnists: shock, sadness, and calls on the U.S. military to punish, and not just reprimand, the perpetrators. Bahrainis continue to watch Arab satellite coverage of the issue and many fears that the abuse is widespread and that the worse is not yet known. They believe that prisoners in Guantanamo and Afghanistan are also being subjected to torture. Papers are full of political cartoons poking fun at American values of freedom and human rights in light of the prisoner abuse. End summary.

12. EDITORIAL COMMENT/BLOCK QUOTES:

ENGLISH DAILY "BAHRAIN TRIBUNE" EDITORIAL, 5/5:

"Moral Decadence of Coalition Soldiers"

"The vulgar and systematic torture of Iraqi prisoners by coalition troops in Abu Ghraib prison has shown the moral decadence and bankruptcy of some of the American and British soldiers. It seems there was an understanding between the US and UK troops as to how badly the captured should be mistreated. That most of the coalition troops are mentally sick became doubtless when a group of twenty Indians who ran away from a US military camp in Iraq told their story in the Hindustan Times. One of them said they were taken to an American army camp in Mosul where they were told that they had been 'bought' to work in the kitchen. "We were slaves in the American kitchens." These stories have made it amply clear that the US-UK forces are much more inhuman than previously thought. They abide by no engagement rules and would make animals blush with their torture tactics.

..Torture is a tool of the weak. It will never help bring peace in Iraq. The blood-boiling pictures will make more people inside and outside Iraq determined to carry out attacks against the Americans and British. Those responsible - no matter how influential and senior they are - must be punished for war crimes and given exemplary punishment. Otherwise there is no reason for us not to believe that the illegal detainees in Afghanistan and in Guantanamo Bay are also subject to the same affront."

SEMI-INDEPENDENT ARABIC DAILY "AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ" 5/4,
BY COLUMNIST RADHI SAMAK (moderate Bahraini columnist,
returned International Visitor):

"The Dimensions of the Torture Scandal"

"It would have been surprising if there were no human rights violations or torture incidents against Iraqi prisoners, because the history of America since the end of World War II shows that its forces tortured and degraded the citizens of any country it occupied. The American and Britain administrations are trying to depict the incidents as if they were the acts of a few individuals, but the reality is that any occupation on earth lacks ethics and moral values."

SEMI-INDEPENDENT ARABIC DAILY "AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ" 5/4,
COLUMNIST Fawziya Rasheed (Bahraini columnist):

"The Scandals of American Liberty and Happy Democracy" (part I)

"As much as the pictures of tortured Iraqis were horrible, the reactions of the American and British leaders were pitiful if we take in consideration that they were responsible for everything that has happened in Iraq so far. CBS network has only revealed the tip of the iceberg of the many facts that have been hidden. This incident shows the true ugly face of the American slogans of democracy and human rights. That is why verbal condemnation is not

enough. Arab governments and the international community must form an international investigation commission to disclose the crimes of occupation forces in Iraq."

SEMI-INDEPENDENT ARABIC DAILY "AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ" 5/5,
COLUMNIST Fawziya Rasheed (Bahraini columnist):

"The Scandals of American Liberty and Happy Democracy" (part II)

"Unlike the image that America promoted about the goals of the war in Iraq, facts show us clearly that everything is crumbling down on America after the crimes that its mercenary soldiers committed there were revealed. All that we have seen so far about the crimes and torture Americans committed against Iraqis is actually a small amount of the barbaric crimes that lie beneath. American and British officials must be punished for these crimes because all of them happened with their knowledge and blessing. Arab lawyers and legal experts must act together to take these crimes and those who were responsible for them to an international tribunal not only to question these crimes but also the war and its hidden objectives."

13. Minimize considered.
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